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Viasa

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Viasa

IATA	ICAO	CALLSIGN
VA	**VIA**	**VIASA**

FOUNDED	1960
CEASED OPERATIONS	1997
HUBS	Simón Bolívar International Airport
FLEET SIZE	85
DESTINATIONS	46
HEADQUARTERS	Caracas, Venezuela
KEY PEOPLE	▪ Manuel Mejia (CEO) ▪ Elias D. Lopez (President & Founder)

Viasa (**Venezolana Internacional de Aviación, Sociedad Anónima**, *Venezuelan International Airways*), was a Venezuelan airline headquartered in the Torre Viasa in Caracas.[1][2] Launched in 1960, it was nationalised in 1975 due to financial problems, and re-privatised in 1991, with the major stake going to Iberia. It was shut down in 1997.

Viasa's livery consisted of silver on the belly, white on the top part of the fuselage color, with orange and blue cheatlines that went all the way to the start of the tail. The fuselage featured the name *Viasa* written in orange on top of the cheatlines. The tail was all orange, with the name Viasa in white. After Iberia took over, all the fuselage went white, and so did the tail. The cheatlines were made thicker around the plane's cockpit, to resemble Iberia's planes.

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[edit] History

[EDIT] EARLY YEARS

Viasa was the result of a government decision in 1959 to transfer the international operations of Venezuela's government airline Línea Aeropostal Venezolana – (Aeropostal) – to a newly-created joint venture which, free from government interference, could adequately perform the task of serving as the nation's flag carrier. Aeropostal put up 51% of the capital and private investors including Avensa (owned then by Grupo Boulton and Pan American World Airways) the remaining 49%. The board of directors came entirely from the private sector. The Chairman of the Board was Mr. Oscar Augusto Machado Zuloaga, a very competent and well liked gentleman, who was instrumental in Viasa's commercial success and immediate acceptance by the market.

Viasa began its life as an entity in November 1960, replacing Avensa to receive an order for two Convair 880-22M that Avensa had placed, and entering an agreement with KLM for a wet-lease of DC-8 equipment with which to begin operations to Europe on April 1, 1961. KLM would maintain a nurturing relationship with Viasa for another 24 years.

May 1961 saw the loss of Viasa Flight 897, when a KLM Douglas DC-8 operating a Viasa flight from Lisbon crashed into the Atlantic Ocean for unknown reasons.

In 1963, Viasa pooled services with Iberia and Alitalia and received its third Convair, which it sublet to KLM for its Netherlands Antilles services (later transferred to Air ALM). Montego Bay and Mexico were added. By 1965, its first DC-8-53 (YV-C-VIC) was delivered, followed by a second DC-8-53 a year later (YV-C-VID).

In 1967 it began operations with a couple of DC-9-15s, wet leased from Avensa, and provided technical support to a Panamanian airline (Paisa) with routes to San José in Costa Rica, Panama, Barranquilla, (Colombia), Maracaibo and Caracas. Equally, it began flights to Trinidad and Barbados and signed a pool agreement with BOAC for the Caracas-Antigua-London route.

In December 1968, Viasa received its first DC-8-63 followed by the second one in May 1969, standardizing its fleet on Douglas airliners.

It also formed a full-cargo subsidiary known as Transcarga with a dry-leased DC-8F (N804SW), which flew from Caracas and Maracaibo to Miami, Panama and New York.

Viasa's worst fatal accident occurred on March 16, 1969, in Maracaibo at Grano de Oro Airport where a DC-9-32(also operated by Avensa) crashed on take off falling on nearby blocks of flats and killing all on board plus an almost equal number on the ground. The airplane had been delivered from McDonnell Douglas two weeks before.

In 1971, Viasa signed another agreement with KLM for the dry-leasing of 747-200 equipment from April 1972. PH-BUG was appropriately christened « Orinoco » after Venezuela's largest river and began operations from Caracas to Madrid, Paris, Amsterdam and, in the summer of 1973, to Rome, Milan, Maracaibo and Panamá.

With the arrival of its own McDonnel Douglas DC-10-30 in April 1974 again with KLM's help, Viasa began a process of fleet standardisation based on the DC-10-30.

In 1980 Viasa partly leased 747 freighters from Seaboard World, based in JFK, to operate freight flights from Miami and New York to Caracas. Later, a 747 freighter was dry leased from World Airways, based in Oakland California.

Also, temporarily, a passenger 747 was leased from World Airways to operate passenger flights during the high vacation season in July/August/September to operate to Orlando, FL. Viasa's crews used to refer to it as the « white whale » due to its totally white painted airframe

Upon the devaluation of the bolivar, in 1983, imports dropped precipitously, and Viasa ended the 747 freight operation. It was

resumed in 1985 partially leasing another 747 freighter from Flying Tigers, based in Los Angeles. And it was maintanined until 1987 when it finally ended 747 operation forever.

[EDIT] NATIONALISATION

A VIASA McDonnell Douglas DC-10-30 at Fiumicino Airport, Rome, Italy. (1987)

By 1975 the airline, which had been a model of management and had returned a profit every year since its creation, began showing a disease typical of many other airlines, as, plagued by rising fuel costs and union problems, it posted its first ever loss for the fiscal October 1975-September 1976 year. The Government intervened by nationalising the airline and thus began its downturn, not noticeable at first since Venezuela's economy was strong backed by high oil income and the government did not mind pumping in money to cover mounting losses.

By 1979, Viasa had built up a fleet of 6 DC-10-30s, 2 DC-8-63s, 2 DC-8-53s and 1 DC-8-63F.

In the summer of 1982, Viasa leased a couple of MD-82s from KLM for the Caribbean routes and for new flights from Barquisimeto, Barcelona and Porlamar to Miami, but these were returned to KLM in 1984.

In 1985, Viasa got rid of all its old DC-8s plus a DC-10-30 and kept just 5 DC-10-30s. It revamped its livery almost completely in 1986 by changing its aircraft livery, adopting a whiter body with 3-tone blue cheatlines under the windows. The orange tail kept the white Viasa letters which had been adopted in 1978 with the arrival of DC-10-30 YV-135C.

Two former Lufthansa Airbus A300-B4 jets were leased from GPA in 1987 for the United States and South American services. In 1987, too, the airline was allowed for the first time ever to begin domestic services (something it never quite did as it preferred to stick to international routes instead) and make use of empty seats on the Caracas-Maracaibo and Caracas-Porlamar legs.

[EDIT] PRIVATISATION

A VIASA Boeing 727-200 Advanced at Miami International Airport. (1992)

The red ink continued to flow and, with the new government policies adopted in 1989, Viasa became the immediate target of privatisation, the idea being that airline employees would retain a 20% shareholding, private investors an additional 60% and the State would keep the rest plus a golden share.

Iberia, the Spanish flag carrier, was the favored bidder in August 1991, competing against KLM, Viasa's past partner. Iberia apparently milked the airline, (some Venezuelans point at this as one of Viasa's causes of bankruptcy). While it could be argued that it was not wise to sell a government owned losing company to another government owned losing company, changing the old ways of Viasa was an uphill battle.

All its aircraft were placed under Iberia's ownership, the Airbuses were sent back to GPA, former Iberia 727s were used by Viasa (competing on the US routes versus American's 757s or A300-600s and United's 757s) and all supplies were purchased centrally through Madrid.

The airline closed for good under acrimony and very sour labour relations in January 1997.

[edit] Destinations

Viasa was the only Latin American airline that flew jet aircraft since its creation, starting with services to the Azores, Lisbon,

Madrid, Paris, Rome, Milan, Amsterdam and London in April 1961, and, after the delivery of its two Convair 880-22M planes, to New York, the Dominican Republic, Panama, New Orleans, Maracaibo, Aruba, Curaçao, Miami, Houston, Bogotá and Lima.

For many years, Viasa offered service on the route between Simón Bolívar International Airport and Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This route was one of the first to be cut-off after Viasa ended their relationship with KLM.

[EDIT] NORTH AMERICA

- Canada
  - Toronto (Toronto Pearson International Airport)
- Mexico
  - Cancun (Cancún International Airport)
  - Mexico City (Mexico City International Airport)
  - Los Cabos (Los Cabos International Airport)
- United States
  - Los Angeles (Los Angeles International Airport)
  - Miami (Miami International Airport)
  - New York City (John F. Kennedy International Airport)
  - Houston (George Bush Intercontinental Airport)
  - New Orleans (Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport)
  - Orlando (Orlando International Airport)
  - Washington, D.C. (Washington Dulles International Airport)

[EDIT] CENTRAL AMERICA

- Costa Rica
  - San Jose (Juan Santamaria International Airport)
- Panama
  - Panama City (Tocumen International Airport)

[EDIT] SOUTH AMERICA

- Argentina
  - Buenos Aires (Ministro Pistarini International Airport)
- Bolivia
  - La Paz (El Alto International Airport)
- Brazil
  - Manaus (Eduardo Gomes International Airport)
  - Rio de Janeiro (Galeão International Airport)
  - Sao Paulo (Guarulhos International Airport)
- Chile
  - Santiago (Comodoro Arturo Merino Benitez International Airport)
- Colombia
  - Bogotá (El Dorado International Airport)
  - Cartagena (Rafael Núñez International Airport)
- Ecuador
  - Guayaquil (José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport)
  - Quito (Mariscal Sucre International Airport)
- Peru
  - Lima (Jorge Chavez International Airport)
- Suriname
  - Paramaribo (Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport)

- Venezuela
  - Caracas (Simón Bolívar International Airport) *Hub*
  - Maracaibo (La Chinita International Airport)
  - Porlamar (Del Caribe International General Santiago Marino Airport)

[EDIT] CARIBBEAN

- Aruba
  - Oranjestad (Queen Beatrix International Airport)
- Barbados
  - Bridgetown (Grantley Adams International Airport)
- Cuba
  - Havana (José Martí International Airport)
- Curaçao
  - Willemstad (Hato International Airport)

- Dominican Republic
  - Punta Cana (Punta Cana International Airport)
- Jamaica
  - Kingston (Norman Manley International Airport)
- Puerto Rico
  - San Juan (Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport)
- Saint Martin
  - Philipsburg (Princess Juliana International Airport)
- Trinidad and Tobago
  - Port of Spain (Piarco International Airport)

[EDIT] EUROPE

- France
  - Paris (Charles de Gaulle Airport)
- Germany
  - Frankfurt (Frankfurt Airport)
- Italy
  - Milan (Malpensa Airport)
  - Rome (Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport)
- Netherlands
  - Amsterdam (Amsterdam Airport Schiphol)
- Portugal
  - Lisbon (Portela Airport)
  - Oporto (Francisco de Sá Carneiro Airport)
- Spain
  - Madrid (Madrid Barajas Airport)
  - Santiago de Compostela (Santiago de Compostela Airport)
  - Tenerife (Tenerife North Airport)
- Switzerland
  - Zurich (Zürich Airport)
- United Kingdom
  - London (London Heathrow Airport)

[EDIT] MIDDLE EAST

- Lebanon
  - Beirut (Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport)

[edit] Fleet

A VIASA Airbus A300B4-200 at Miami International Airport. (1993)

- Convair 880-22M-3 = 8
- Douglas DC-8-63 = 4
- Douglas DC-8-53 = 7
- Douglas DC-8-61C = 2
- DouglasDC-8-55 = 5
- DouglasDC-8-33 = 4
- Douglas DC-10-30 = 15
- Boeing 747-273(C)5 = 4
- Boeing 747-130 = 5
- Boeing 727-2M7 = 5
- Boeing 727-256 = 4
- Boeing 727-281 = 7
- Douglas DC-9-32 = 4
- Douglas DC-9-33(F) = 4

- McDonnell Douglas MD-82 = 3
- Airbus A300-B4 = 4

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1. ^ « World Airline Directory. » *Flight International*. March 30, 1985. 130. » Retrieved on June 17, 2009. « Head Office: Torre Viasa, Avenida Sur 25, Plaza Morelos, Caracas 105, Venezuela »
2. ^ « World Airline Directory. » *Flight International*. March 26, 1988. 125.

[edit] External links

	Venezuela portal
	Companies portal
	Aviation portal

- Photos of Viasa's aircraft
- Commercial of Viasa from 1987

[HIDE]V · D · ELISTS RELATING TO AVIATION

General	Aircraft (manufacturers) · Aircraft engines (manufacturers) · Airlines (defunct) · Airports · Civil authorities · Museums · Registration prefixes · Rotorcraft (manufacturers) · Timeline
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